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## Statement to the Productivity Commission Re Heritage

Dear Sirs

I apologize firstly for taking too long to make any submission.

I am a heritage adviser and architect and have worked fairly constantly in the field for over 10 years. I have some developed some fairly strong views about heritage management, the most important points I would summarize as follows:

1. Owners of heritage items need fairer tax incentives to carry our repairs.

Owners of heritage are often , in the country, elderly and without great means. They, and others, need more assistance in repairing and carrying out repair and conservation works. At least full tax deductibility of approved works and costs should be available. I think the tax break should be in the order of 125%.

(Tax deductibility may be an option for people in business ie as a business expense, but for retired people on their own income, and for farmers this is not a reality.)

2. All listing of places generally, as being of local significance, could be deleted in lieu of generic terms and conditions. A. All places within the bounds of a conservation area

B. all places that are older than 50 years.

By sing general groupings people don't feel singled out. They are much more willing to comply and to contribute information 'about the place'.

In a recent heritage study at Narromine Shire I offered the following advice which will expand on the above in more detail. Such clauses could apply generally to all country Shires:

### **An alternative to LEP listings of European significance**

Narromine Council presently has heritage provisions in its Local Environmental Plan 1997 (LEP) clause 20 , as noted in 6.03.01, whose conditions regarding the care and treatment of heritage items covers all items that are by definition a relic or those that are formerly scheduled in the Heritage list. An alternative to the inclusion in the LEP of a schedule of heritage items would be a reliance instead on the definition of a relic, or the widening of the definition if need be to cover all places over 50 years of age, together with a listing only of places that do not fall into that description, eg landscapes.

There are a few points this raises.

1. Such a clause should cover all European heritage places over 50 years without 'fear or favour'. The problems of limited knowledge, and 'undiscovered' heritage assets would not be an issue.
2. The clause would not need regular updates, which are very difficult under the present system of LEP amendments.
3. All European heritage places could be construed as already covered by the 'relic' inclusions.
4. Such a system would encourage, rather than discourage, the collection of more information about places. This information could be contained in the SHI (State

Heritage Inventory) software forms which would then form a continuous historical and heritage information package.

5. The standard procedures that the Planner follows would not alter. At the present time the Planner, when receiving a development application about a place which appears older than 50 years, and which is not scheduled as a heritage item, none the less initially carries out a basic investigation of significance making a site visit to look at the physical evidence and making enquiries as to the history of the place. If the place is found to be significant historically, scientifically or aesthetically it is then treated in much the same way as a heritage item
6. The word relic may imply 'fragmentary remains, or places, objects, no longer in use.' but this definition could be widened. e.g. the opening wording to the LEP clause 20 (1) could read  
*'The following development may be carried out, in the vicinity of, or on any relic or building of more than 50 years of age, only with development consent'*
7. One problem with this system is that it does not alert the Planner to a particular site and in some cases does not give the owner sufficient knowledge. However all existing SHI data items, whether listed or not could not be connected by GPS mapping, so that the Planner has easy access to information on all known site.

#### ***Recommendation***

***In the future examine the feasibility of this alternative approach to listing, for the care and management of European items over 50 years of age in the LEP.***

Additional clauses recommended an improved attitude towards heritage places in the rural landscape:

#### Subdivision

Narromine Council could assist the subdivision of rural lands which leads to the conservation or saving of a Heritage item. This subdivision should allow a smaller area of land than is normally acceptable in rural areas, but one which is both acceptable to minimise conflict and manageable. It would probably be being between two and ten acres. This would only apply to items that are listed on the LEP Heritage Schedule, or are recommended to be listed, and where it can be shown that a new separate ownership would lead to the conservation and preservation of the item, and be environmentally sustainable.

#### Additional Dwellings

Narromine Council could assist the retention and conservation of heritage listed buildings on rural lands by allowing 'an additional dwelling' to exist where the existing heritage listed dwelling is to be retained and an additional new dwelling is desired.

This additional dwelling should be possible on land than is normally only allowed to have one 'residence/dwelling' in rural areas or villages. This should only apply to items that are listed on the LEP Heritage Schedule, and where it can be shown that a new separate dwelling would lead to the conservation and preservation of the item, and be environmentally sustainable

I hope this concepts will be well received by you

And I am happy to contribute further if you have any questions or would like further examples

**Barbara Hickson**

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Heritage Adviser to Bathurst, Lithgow and Orange Council.